

Saint Joseph of Cupertino

1603-1663

PARADISE

For Saint Joseph of Cupertino it was enough to repeat “Heaven, Heaven” to remain enraptured in ecstasy. The Saint was born in Cupertino on June 17, 1603 in the province of Lecce, in the then “Kingdom of Naples”. During childhood, he was seriously ill for a long time, and was miraculously healed in the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace of Galatone. At the age of eight, Joseph had a vision while he was at school and this was repeated many other times. He was also very slow and careless, and wandered aimlessly. He could not recount a story to the end and he often stopped in the middle of a sentence, because he did not find the right words. His perseverance with books was of no use, and he attempted to learn the trade of shoemaker, but was unsuccessful. He had two uncles in the Franciscan Order: at the age of seventeen he too desired to be a Franciscan, but was rejected due to his ignorance. In 1620, he was accepted as a novice among the Capuchins of Martina Franca, near Taranto, but they sent him away after eight months because he was very careless. His mother finally was able to have him accepted as servant at “The Grotto” Monastery of the Conventual Franciscans of Cupertino. While he was there, as an “oblato” and as a “lay brother”, he showed great virtues, humility, obedience and love for penance. It was

decided that he could become a full member of the Order and study to become a priest.

On March 20, 1627, the examiner asked him to explain to him the only thing that he succeeded in learning well, and thus Joseph became a deacon! One year later, on March 28, he was able to become a priest: he appeared at the exam along with many other candidates. After interrogating the first ones, the Bishop was very satisfied with the results and decided to pass everyone. Joseph was among the fortunate candidates to whom no questions were asked and became a priest together with the others: this is why he is considered the Patron of students!

The “Flying Saint” often went into ecstasy and spoke with God. He remained motionless like a statue, unresponsive like a rock, and nothing could move him. Anything that related to the Lord placed him in a state of contemplation. This happened also when he looked at a religious painting, or when he heard the sound of a bell, sacred music, the name of God, of the Virgin Mary or of a Saint. His fellow friars could prick him with needles or burn him with hot embers in an attempt to reawaken him, but he did not notice anything. Frequently he arose from the ground and remained suspended in air: in church he happened to fly



towards the altar or above it. He was seen to levitate by people more than seventy times while he said Mass or prayed.

Joseph performed many miracles, especially among the poor people. He touched blind eyes, and they saw, he took in his arms a sick child and healed him; he transcribed the blessing of St. Francis and this manuscript, when circulated in town, performed wonders. He celebrated Mass for the last time on August 15, 1663 and died on the 18th of September.

